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ABSTRACT

The peaceful transition of the political systems in Central Europe created a rather unique and contradictory situation. While these nations reached one of their long-term aims, a greater level of independence and freedom, in everyday life there are few signs of positive changes; in fact life has become even harder. In this socio-political context data were collected on how students cope with the contradictions of the transitional process. In the framework of a larger study, high-school students and their mothers were asked about their views on some consequences of the socio-political change. Results show that both students and their mothers are more pessimistic concerning the next few years than about the long term, and mothers think the coming years will be even harder than the students do. For the long term expectations, mothers' and students' answers are closer to each other. No significant correlations were found between the answers of students and mothers, thus the beliefs and views of students about the consequences of the transition are not determined by their family, rather they are influenced by other factors. (Author)

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SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE VIEW OF STUDENTS ON LIFE PERSPECTIVES

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SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE VIEW OF STUDENTS ON LIFE PERSPECTIVES

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Poster presented in the
Poster Workshop on Youth and Social Change

Eleventh Biennial Meetings of
International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2-6 July 1991

Abstract

The peaceful transition of the political systems in Central Europe created a rather unique and contradictory situation. While these nations reached one of their long-term aims, a greater level of independence and freedom, in everyday life there are few signs of positive changes, in fact life has become even harder. In this socio-political context data were collected on how students cope with the contradictions of the transitional process. In the framework of a larger study, high-school students and their mothers were asked about their views on some consequences of the socio-political change. Results show that both students and their mothers are more pessimistic concerning the next few years then about the long term, and mothers think the coming years will be even harder then the students do. For the long term expectations mothers' and students' answers are closer to each other. No significant correlations were found between the answers of students and mothers, thus the belief and views of students about the consequences of the transition are not determined by their family, rather they are influenced by other factors.

Aims

The aim of the study was to examine the perceptions of high-school students on the consequences of socio-political changes in Hungary. What do they think about how the transition will affects their future life? What are their mothers' views on the same issues? What is the relationship between the students' and their mothers' answers?

Method

In the framework of a larger study, 252 high-school students in eleventh grade (17 year olds) were personally interviewed at their schools. Their mothers were interviewed in their homes.

The students' schools were selected from the Szeged high-schools in such a way that they represented the different types of secondary schools in Hungary.

Questions were asked of the students and their mothers in the same way, thus the responses can be directly compared. The questions presented in this work were closed-ended. Subjects used a 5-point scale which was presented them by the interviewer for their responses.

The interviews took place in May through July 1990, some months after the first free parliamentary elections, when the outline of the program of the new government was already known.

Results

The frequency distributions of the students' and mothers' answers are presented in Figures 1 through 8. The first three questions are connected with some crucial problems of everyday life: finding a job, the constraints of everyday life and the possibilities of making money.

Both students and mothers think that there will be fewer possibilities of finding a job, and mothers are the most pessimistic. Surprisingly (despite the growing freedom in the social, political and economic life), both groups expect growing constraints on everyday life, mothers are again somewhat more pessimistic. There are large differences among students and mothers concerning their views of the economic possibilities: students expect more, mothers fewer possibilities of making money.

The next questions asked about the standard of living in the year of testing, the next few years and later years. Subject were asked to compare the estimated future life standard with the standard in 1989 (the year before the interview). Both groups expect a much lower standard of living for the actual year and a gradual improvement for the future. In the short-term, mothers are again more pessimistic, but the difference between students' and mothers' estimation decreases with time, and for the long-term the difference is not significant.

Both students' and mothers' answers were very consistent in themselves, high inner correlations were found among their responses (Tables 1 and 2). Correlations were especially high among the answers concerning the life standard in the future (1992-1995-2000) in both samples. No significant correlations were found among the short-term and long-term expectations in either case.

There was no significant correlation between the answers of students and their mothers (Table 3).

Conclusions

Although students consider the coming years hard, they expect that in 4-5 years life will improve significantly. These long-term hopes might help them to cope with the present difficulties. They are always more optimistic then their mothers. While there are not significant correlations between the answers of students and their mothers, their views of the future are not determined by the family. Rather, they have their own opinion influenced by other factors.

HOW THE POSSIBILITIES OF FINDING A JOB WILL CHANGE?

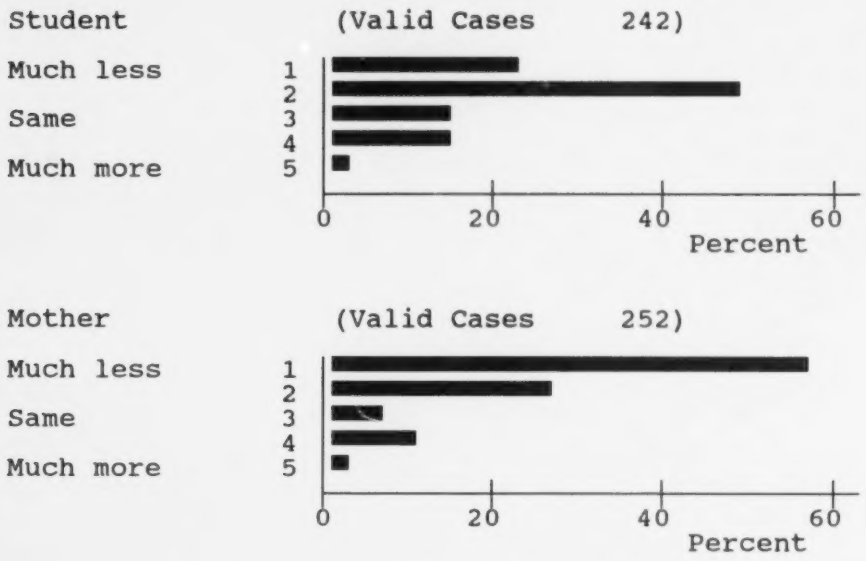

Figure 1

HOW THE CONSTRAINTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE WILL CHANGE?

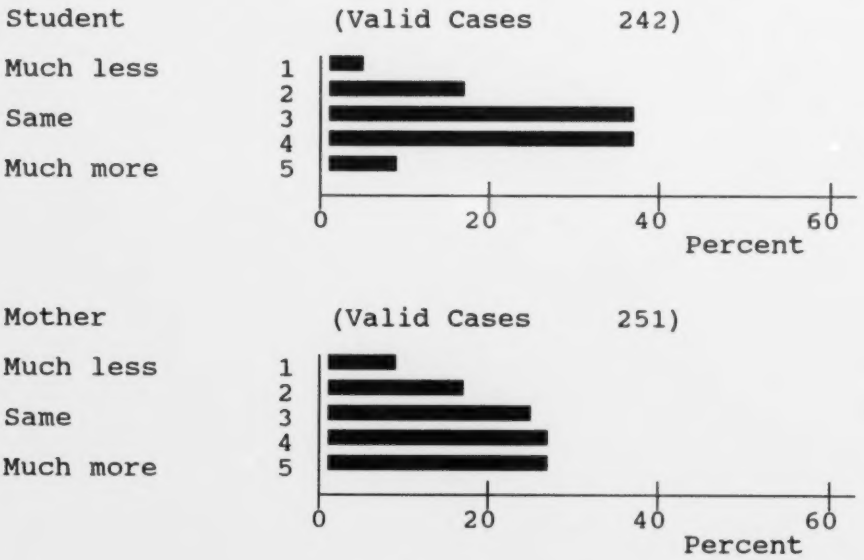

Figure 2

HOW THE POSSIBILITIES OF MAKING MONEY WILL CHANGE?

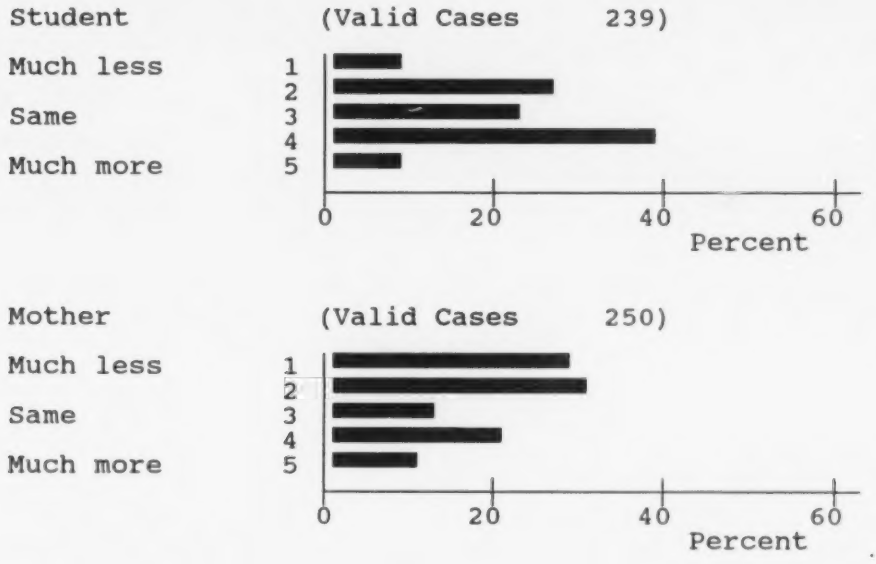

Figure 3

COMPARED WITH 1989, HOW THE LIFE STANDARD WILL CHANGE BY 1990?

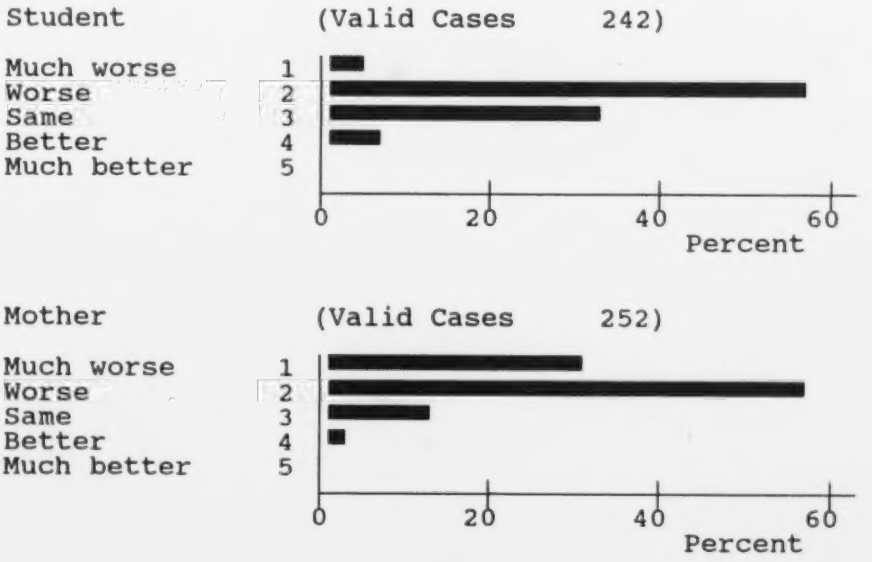

Figure 4

COMPARED WITH 1989, HOW THE LIFE STANDARD WILL CHANGE BY 1991?

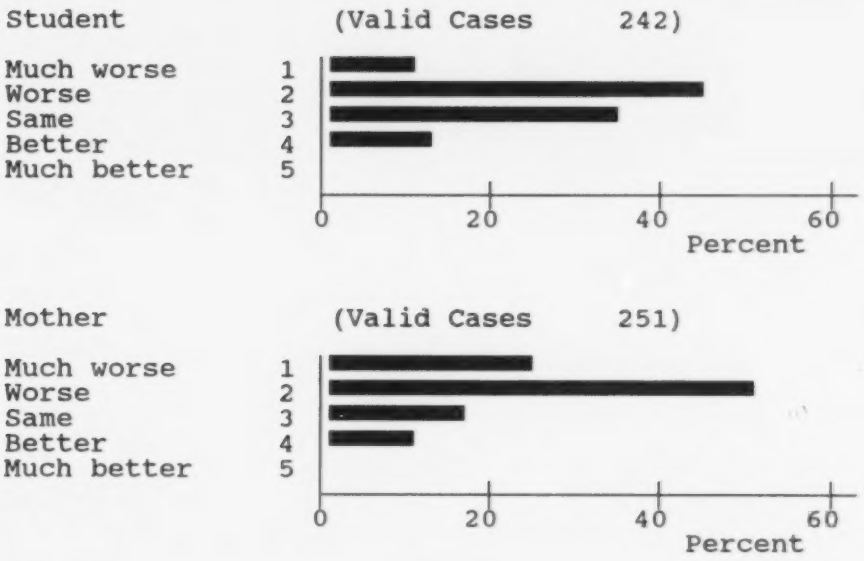

Figure 5

COMPARED WITH 1989, HOW THE LIFE STANDARD WILL CHANGE BY 1992?

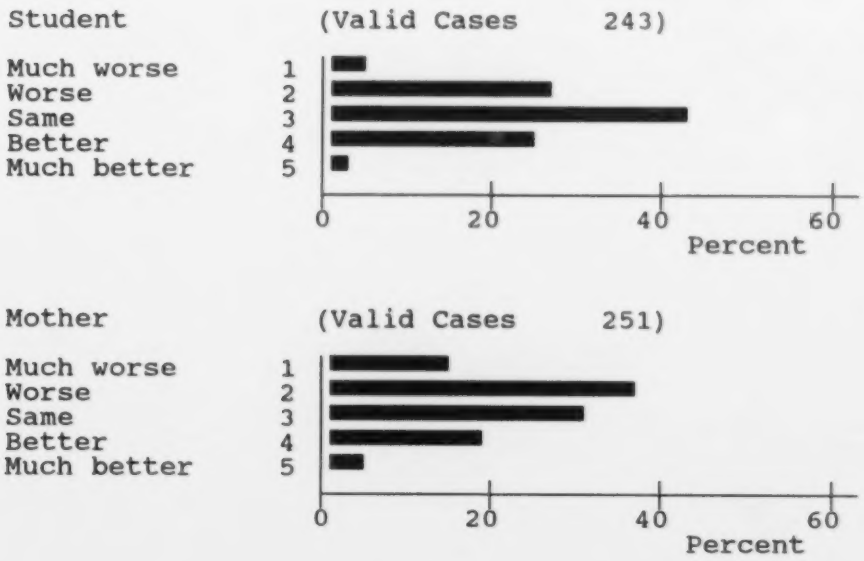

Figure 6

COMPARED WITH 1989, HOW THE LIFE STANDARD WILL CHANGE BY 1995?

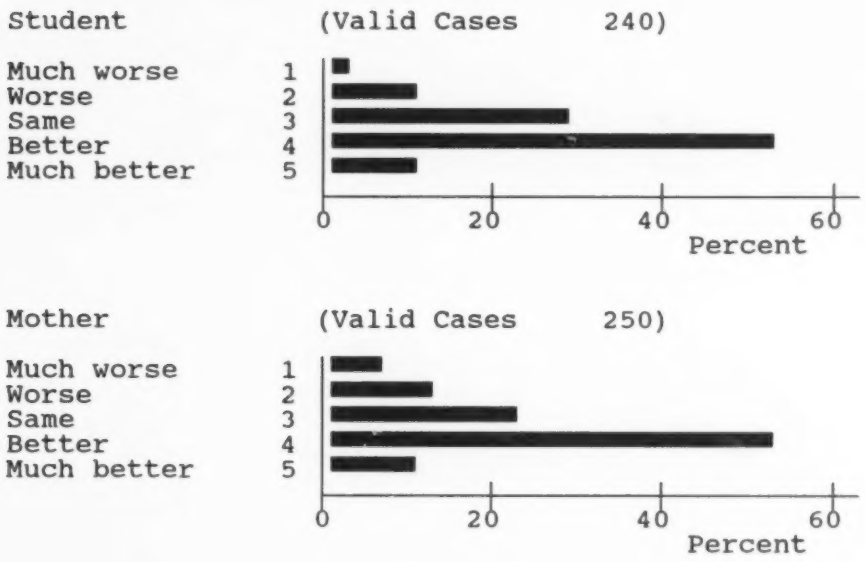

Figure 7

COMPARED WITH 1989, HOW THE LIFE STANDARD WILL CHANGE BY 2000?

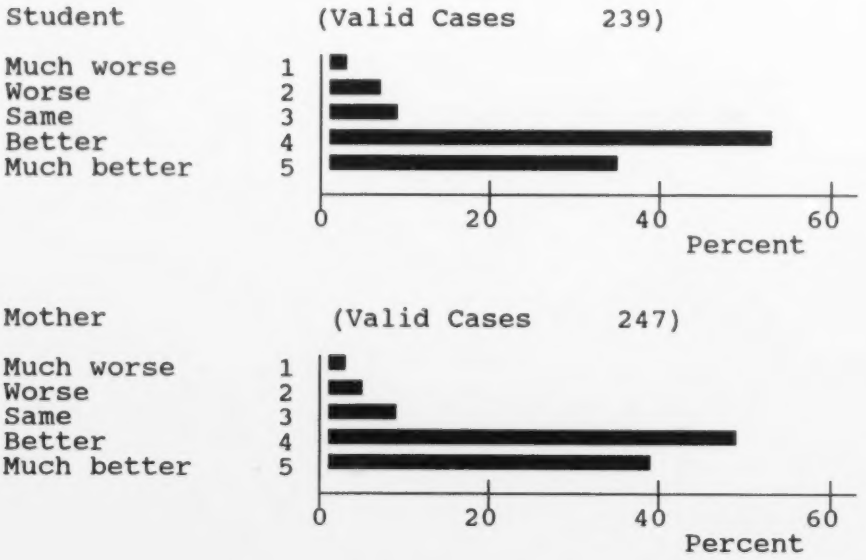

Figure 8

Table 1 Correlations of students' responses

	Job	Constr.	Money	1990	1991	1992	1995
Constrains	-.1310						
Money	.3446	-.1588					
1990	.1263	.0519	.1342				
1991	.0725	.0730	.1075	.5740			
1992	.1743	.0584	.1141	.3505	.7186		
1995	.2010	-.0368	.1922	.2154	.4653	.6973	
2000	.2097	-.1042	.2519	.1038	.2812	.5037	.7469

Table 2 Correlations of mothers' responses

	Job	Const.	Money	1990	1991	1992	1995
Constrains	-.2962						
Money	.4483	-.1076					
1990	.1800	-.0778	.0876				
1991	.2685	-.1200	.1281	.6397			
1992	.2136	-.1676	.1181	.4589	.7349		
1995	.1824	-.1229	.1109	.3572	.5141	.6592	
2000	.1365	-.1602	.1051	.1555	.3054	.4853	.6937

Table 3 Correlations between students' and mothers' responses

Moth. \ Stud.	Job	Const.	Money	1990	1991	1992	1995	2000
Job	**-.0535**	.0031	-.0513	.0042	-.1276	-.0763	-.1372	-.1342
Constrains	-.0349	**.0131**	-.0253	.0787	.0606	.0478	-.0113	.0014
Money	-.0371	.0356	**.0727**	-.0380	-.0986	-.0443	-.0562	-.0353
1990	-.0076	.0257	-.0537	**.0335**	-.0236	-.0214	-.0080	-.0122
1991	-.0088	-.0343	-.1185	-.0688	**-.1477**	-.0439	-.0590	-.0185
1992	-.0293	-.0891	-.0958	-.0902	-.0920	**-.0077**	-.0212	.0060
1995	-.1334	-.0221	-.1834	-.0250	-.1048	-.0868	**-.1174**	-.0917
2000	-.0710	-.0253	-.0481	-.0333	-.0462	-.0766	.0036	**-.0359**